

[637 cont.]

764 cousins. Female persons are also put in the box by men. Then, after the corpse has been propped up with straw, a board is slid in at the back from above. The men then wash their hands. The box is put in a room and placed on four raised clay bricks, so that it will be easy to pick it up later to carry it. A white felt mat is usually spread out beforehand. The box of a deceased master of the household or his wife always stands in the main house; in other cases it is put in the room in which the dead person used to live.

Next to the box there is a small, coffin-like little casket whose lid is pegged down like those of the Chinese coffins. It is the little casket in which the bones that remain after cremation are kept. Usually a rolling pin (noodle roller), which was

412 made at the same time as the coffin or death-box, leans
764 against the box (8). [638] Other rolling pins are not used at

[322] all.

[177]

8. [Foreign text p. 653.] This custom, too, seems to have been borrowed from the Chinese. The rolling pin is called mien-kan or kan-ch'ang in Chinese. On the average it is one meter long and three to four centimeters thick. It is used principally to roll noodles. The rolling pin is also called pai-hu by the Chinese, that is, white tiger, because it can become the seat of the tiger god for soothsaying or shamanistic ceremonies, just as the spirit-spear becomes the seat of the spirit. The rolling pin is also handled in the following way: a man takes it with both hands and calls down the demon into it; then the roller shakes and trembles.

The enemy of the rolling pin is the threshing roller, lu-chu. It represents the dark (green) dragon, ch'ing-lung.

[778]

[787]

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[Note on foreign text p. 653 cont.]
the declared opponent of the white tiger. -- Furthermore, the white tiger is powerless against anything that comes from the dead or is connected with the dead; he fears coffins, death-boxes, burials, etc. For that reason coffin-making is the best opportunity for making a rolling pin, and therefore the rolling pin is propped against the death-box. The relationship of the tiger to the rolling pin is thereby neutralized. -- People very rarely have a rolling pin made other than at the time of a burial; the carpenter must then plane the pole on a threshing roller, the enemy of the white tiger. The millstone also has an effect similar to that of the threshing roller, for it crushes the provider of the "white," that is, the grain from which the flour comes.

764 all. As in the case of the crouching corpse, a small kang table with the gifts to the dead is also placed before the death-box.

171 Men and women kowtow before it, burn white paper, like the

[782] Chinese, and weep aloud (9).

[789]

9. [Foreign text p. 653.] Aside from the bone-casket I once saw a small wooden casket of coffin-like form beside a death-box. The people said a small manlike doll lay in it. It was supposed to keep misfortune and death away from the house. The informant had not yet seen that and thought that this custom had come from

time with the beating of drums and cymbals perform their wildest dances for a long time. Usually three or four among them seem to be possessed. All of a sudden the chief of the shamans becomes excited to fever pitch, and howls "go to the goddess." Then, followed by the other shamans, he grasps a chicken and, dancing with fury, bites its neck and jerks off its head in a wild movement. Grimacing with distorted face, and glittering eyes, he throws the bleeding chicken head in the supposed direction of the goddess, uttering dreary cries and indistinct sounds. After the rite is accomplished, the people go home for dinner. It is indeed a savage means of greeting "a goddess of joy," with a bleeding head and with such wild appearance. 796
756

The split-personality of the "good" shaman who the first day was so gentle, so kind, so considerate for the spirits, shows up more and more; he has to see blood and to offer bloody sacrifices.

LEAVE-TAKING OF THE SPIRITS

After sunset all the villagers come to the temple. In some villages the women are not allowed to attend the evening rites, but elders asserted that in former times the women were admitted everywhere. [352]

A hundred small lamps are prepared, the cup made with dough and the wick with twisted cotton wool. Into the cup is poured vegetable oil. The lamps are displayed in rows on the offering table in front of the pole and the statues. The shamans first perform the usual dance, keeping time to the beating of the drums. The leave taking of the guest spirits is called the "opening of the highway" (*k'ai ma-lu*). A bridge* is to be built over which the guests are supposed to pass. A big roll is put on each of the four corners of the table, and a larger one in the middle; a paper banner is placed on each of the five rolls. A lamp is lit near the banners and a plate put near each of them; on the middle plate is placed the head of a chicken. [353]

The chief of the shamans asks the shamans and the apprentices for the meaning of the five rolls. The five rolls mean the five mountains; the five lamps, the five lakes; the five wicks, the five dragons; the banners, the incense which billows up into the sky. Why is the head of a chicken put on the middle plate? In order to steady the *Yin-Yang* (male and female principle of the Taoists). The chief shaman writes, around the roll in the center, the eight Chinese cyclical characters and asks for the explanation of each of them. If one of the shamans or apprentices is unable to answer he is scolded and upbraided in front of the whole gathering.

A bridge is constructed for the spirits from one end of the table to the other by disposing two rows of rolls in which are planted brand new chopsticks; on both sides of the bridge are planted incense sticks in smaller rolls. The shaman asks again for explanations: Is there still another way existing above that bridge or not? An- [354]

* *Eliade, op. cit.*, 419.

/The Monguors/

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*563 Additionally, the older sons move out of their parents' home when
M they are married, taking their share of the inheritance with
342 them. The youngest son, the "guardian of the hearth," remains
591 with his parents and receives the residual inheritance. He and
592 his wife are therefore placed in the "blessed corner" to carry
on the prosperity of the family.

N
*563 Both rich and poor build their own houses. The young people
M of the village all come to help erect the mud walls, and are re-
342 warded with a big dinner. The dwellings of the rich have brick
M foundations for the mud walls, and also painted woodwork inside.
[351] Every courtyard has a prayer flag (on which prayers are written
[182] in Tibetan) fastened to a pole in the middle of the courtyard, and
[353] at the base of the pole, an oven for fire offerings. In the chief's
[352] room in every home there is a picture of the guardian deity of
the family hanging on the wall, and in front of the picture, a low
table where butter lamps and offering bowls are placed.

b. Food, drink and tobacco

N
*563 Although the Mongours are of nomad origin, they do not con-
M tinue to use the staple nomad diet after they adopt an agricultur-
262 al economy. Meat, milk and milk products become luxuries to
[231] the Mongours of Kansu. Because of the scarcity of domestic
animals, meat is seldom eaten except at festivals or celebra-
M tions. For such occasions a sheep is usually killed. Meat is
[252] always boiled, as the Mongours do not like roasted meat.

M
[794] The Mongours eat beef and pork as well as mutton, and unlike
the Mongols, they eat chicken but never the meat of horses,
mules or donkeys. A small religious sect among them, known
as "those who fast," never eat meat or garlic, or drink wine.

M
[412] The staple diet of ordinary people is frugal, consisting main-
ly of tea, bread, noodles made with barley flour, linseed and
colza (rapeseed) oil. Millet is not usually eaten because very
little is grown. Vegetables are raised for sale; only vegetables
pickled in brine and vinegar are eaten daily. Salt, sugar, butter
and wheat flour are luxuries. Only the wealthy can afford fruit.
Each family has its own grindstone for milling barley flour. The
family also bakes its own bread.

N
*563 The Mongours eat with bowls and chopsticks. At home they
M lick their bowls clean before taking them back to the kitchen.
264 Some always keep their bowls with them, in the breasts of their
415 gowns. They are always licked clean, never washed.

N
*563 Most families distill their own liquor from barley or wheat.
M Like the Mongols, both sexes like to drink. Men, especially,
273 have a weakness for it, and drunken fighting at parties is not
[431] uncommon. Wine is used for gifts, and is a necessary part of
any festival occasion.

N
*563 The men are habitual pipe smokers. They smoke the long-
M stemmed Chinese pipe with a small brass bowl at the end. Some
276